

# Bassam Zawadi vs Sultān al ‘Umayrī

By Tahir Muhammad, Salman Nasir

Bassam Zawadi has responded to our second article,<sup>1</sup> which deals with Sh. ‘Umayrī’s conceptualisation and definition of ‘ibāda. We do not think a page by page refutation from us is merited. We would like to draw attention however to an important point. It is clear by now that there are fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the concept and definition of ‘ibāda laid out in Sh. ‘Umayrī’s book and the English rendition of them by Zawadi. In the following, citations from Zawadi are in **green**, and from Sh. ‘Umayrī in **purple**, with emphasis in **red** from us.

## LOCATING THE ESSENCE OF ‘IBĀDA

Zawadi’s view seems to be that ‘ibāda can be dissociated from internal feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart, although they are “**typically**” present in most cases. This means that for Zawadi, the operative factor in an act, which determines whether the act is (or has become) ‘ibāda, is no longer the threshold of utmost humility/submission in the heart. However, this conceptualisation of ‘ibāda is simply not compatible with the way ‘Umayrī presented the topic in his book, wherein the essence of worship (utmost humility/submission) is said to be located in the heart and must be present in every individual instance of ‘ibāda. In other words, ‘ibāda can simply not occur without utmost humility/submission in the heart.

We will first repeat a brief presentation of Sh. ‘Umayrī’s of concept of ‘ibāda before presenting the relevant passages from his book on which it is based, and then follow up with an assessment of Zawadi objections to our presentation.

As explained previously, Sh. ‘Umayrī’s conception of ‘ibāda is as follows:

- The reality and essence of ‘ibāda resides in the heart, in the form of feelings of utmost submission (*khuḍū*) and humility (*dhull*).
- Whenever the essence of ‘ibāda (i.e. feelings of utmost humility and submission) obtains in the heart, it is necessarily expressed or manifested through actions of the limbs.
- Reciprocally, within this concept, for an act to be considered ‘ibāda it must necessarily be underpinned by those feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart.

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<sup>1</sup> Pipe Dreams (2): Sh. ‘Umayrī’s Definition of ‘Ibāda (available [here](#)).

- Any instance of *'ibāda* is necessarily accompanied by an instance of *inħirāf* in *rubūbiyya*.

Put differently, the feelings in the heart (essence of *'ibāda*) generate or necessitate the actions of the limbs. An action not springing from those feelings cannot be *'ibāda*. At the same time, those feelings are also necessarily accompanied by a “**kufri distorted view**” of *rubūbiyya* called *inħirāf*.<sup>2</sup>

With regards to the categorisation of actions into *'ibāda mahdā* and *'ibāda ghayr mahdā*, worship is conceptualised, in Sh. 'Umayrī's book, as essentially an internal state in which a certain threshold of humility (*khuḍū*) and submission (*dhull*), in the heart, has been reached. It is the breach of this threshold that pushes an individual to perform certain acts. And it is the acts spurred by a breached threshold of feelings of humility/submission in the heart that are considered *'ibāda*. Sh. 'Umayrī then divides acts of *'ibāda* into unconditional (*'ibāda mahdā*) and conditional (*ghayr mahdā*) acts of worship. A physical act, *sujūd* (prostration) for instance, which when performed with an average level of *khuḍū* and *dhull* is not considered *'ibāda*. However, the same physical act, when performed with a higher (i.e. the utmost or ultimate) level of inner *khuḍū* and *dhull* becomes an act of worship. So the acts considered *'ibāda ghayr mahdā* by Sh. 'Umayrī indicate that the threshold of utmost humility/submission in the heart has been breached in the presence of external factors or when consciously and intentionally performed with feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart.

In contrast, the acts that are considered *'ibāda mahdā* are those acts he considers inherently, or always worship (e.g. *ṣalāh*, *fasting*, *Hajj*, *wuḍū'*, etc...). To relate them to his definition, Sh. 'Umayrī claims they are *'ibāda mahdā* because they were designated, in and of themselves, as expressions of ultimate humility and utmost submission by assignment of the Sharī'a.<sup>3</sup>

#### **'UMAYRĪ'S STATEMENTS ON WHICH THIS PRESENTATION IS BASED**

We will repeat here the quotes from Sh. 'Umayrī's book which we used to justify this presentation in our article. As will become clear, they are not the only ones that substantiate this reading.

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<sup>2</sup> Whether the link between those links is causation or correlation is not clarified.

<sup>3</sup> See our previous articles: *Pipe Dreams - A Rejoinder to Sultān al 'Umayrī's Attempt at (un)defining 'ibāda*, p. 6, and *Pipe Dreams (2): Sh. 'Umayrī's Definition of 'ibāda*, p. 18

Sh. 'Umayrī defines 'ibāda as:

مقام اختياري يجتمع فيه غاية الخضوع مع نهاية الذل يوجب على المرء التعلق بمعبوده والاستسلام لإرادته والحرص على الاتصال به والعمل لإرضائه

It is that intentional state which combines feelings of utmost humility and submission which stirs the individual to cling unto his object of 'ibāda, submit to its will, stay in continuous connection with it, and perform actions to please it.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Sh. 'Umayrī rephrased his definition of 'ibāda as:

يمكن أن يقال في تعريف العبادة هي الأعمال الباطنة والظاهرة نابعة عن غاية الذل ونهاية الخضوع في القلب

It is [also] possible to define 'ibāda as: the actions, internal [i.e. of the heart] and external [i.e. of the limbs], springing from the utmost submission and ultimate humility found in the heart.<sup>5</sup>

'Umayrī himself notes that these two wordings of the definition are the same in meaning. Only the words have changed. Which makes it undeniably clear that the “utmost humility and ultimate submission” mentioned in the first wording of the definition also refers to feelings located in the heart.<sup>6</sup>

Sh. 'Umayrī additionally explains that the locus for the essence of 'ibāda is the heart:

أن حقيقة العبادة وجوهرها يرجع إلى معانٍ قلبية مخصوصة وهي غاية الحب ونهاية الذل والتعظيم، وما يلزم عن ذلك من الأعمال الظاهرة

The reality and essence of 'ibāda goes back to specific meanings in the heart: and they are utmost love, and ultimate humility and glorification, and what this necessitates of external actions.<sup>7</sup>

Note that he makes no differentiation here between one category of 'ibāda and another. And while explaining the different clauses of his first definition, Sh.

'Umayrī says:

<sup>4</sup> *Tahqīq al Ifāda*, p. 36 (translation adapted from Bassam Zawadi's).

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> This is probably why Zawadi referred to “utmost humility and ultimate submission” as “feelings” in his own translation of the definition, i.e. because of their relation to the heart:

It is that intentional state which combines **feelings** of utmost humility and submission with an ultimate feeling of love which stirs the individual to cling unto his object of Ibadah, submit to its will, stay in continuous connection with it, and perform actions to please it.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 14

"يجمع فيه بين غاية الخضوع مع نهاية الذل": يعد هذا المعنى أصلاً من الأصول القلبية المكونة لمفهوم العبادة، وقد تواردت مقالات علماء اللغة والتفسير وغيرهم على ذكر هذا المعنى وجعله من أصول العبادة الأساسية التي لا يتحقق إلا بها

"[intentional state which] combines feelings of utmost humility and submission": This is one of the essential components in the heart that make up the concept of 'ibāda. The statements of the scholars of linguistics, *tafsīr*, and others have agreed, one after another, in mentioning this meaning and making it one of the essential components of 'ibāda without which the reality [of 'ibāda] cannot obtain.<sup>9</sup>

As such, for Sh. 'Umayrī it is not conceivable that the threshold of humility and submission in the heart, which turns actions into worship, could be breached without generating actions that point to its occurrence in the heart:

ومن الممتنع أن يتحقق في قلب المعين غاية الذل ونهاية الخضوع لمعين ما ثم لا يظهر على جوارحه فعل من الأفعال يدل على مقتضى ما تحقق في قلبه

It is impossible that utmost humility and ultimate submission would obtain in an individual's heart<sup>10</sup> without the actions indicating the necessity of what has obtained in his heart not becoming manifest on his limbs.<sup>11</sup>

Since acts of 'ibāda *mahdā* are necessarily 'ibāda whenever performed in 'Umayrī's framework, and since "utmost humility and ultimate submission" are essential components of 'ibāda residing in the heart, it follows that this vague threshold of utmost humility/submission has necessarily been breached by anyone who performs them, and that utmost humility/submission has obtained in the heart. In the case of acts of 'ibāda *ghayr mahdā* this breach of the internal threshold is also necessary for the acts to become 'ibāda, but the breach of this threshold is indicated by factors extraneous to the acts themselves. The above amply shows that for 'Umayrī there is no instance of 'ibāda where those feelings of utmost humility and submission are not found *in the heart*.

We cited these quotations in our article to justify our reading of 'Umayrī's position, but as previously mentioned, there are more passages from 'Umayrī's work that support this reading.

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<sup>9</sup> Idem, p. 37

<sup>10</sup> In our article we translated this as 'for an individual'. The translation given here is more precise.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 47

## ZAWADI'S CRITIQUE OF OUR PRESENTATION

Now Zawadi asks:

Moreover, how can Dr. Umayri be said to have departed from the stance that Shirk could be present solely in acts when he has already said that some acts unconditionally constitute worship regardless of any conditions other than the intent to direct them to a being?

He will further clarify later:

The acts themselves have ingrained into their very core the meanings of utmost submission and humility, whose foundations are typically rooted in the heart.

Firstly, why does he call them “conditions”? Sh. ‘Umayrī did not present “utmost *khudū* and *dhull* in the heart” as conditions of *‘ibāda*, but as its essential components. This is how we presented his view, and this presentation is substantiated by the quotes cited above.

Secondly, according to Zawadi's reading, this would mean that these are not essential components, for *‘ibāda* can take place without them. Therefore, the operative factor in cases of *‘ibāda mahdā*, in Zawadi's reading, is not the presence of utmost humility/submission in the heart, but the utmost humility/submission that is somehow mysteriously “ingrained” in the action itself. This would imply that *‘ibāda mahdā* in reality are exceptions to everything that we quoted from Sh. ‘Umayrī above, as the operative factor making it *‘ibāda* is the utmost humility/submission “ingrained” in the action, not utmost humility/submission in the heart which is now rendered unnecessary. This would imply a major difference between *‘ibāda mahdā* and *‘ibāda ghayr mahdā* in terms of understanding their essential nature. This distinction is incoherent with the quotations cited above, nor is there any indication in the book of these two categories: *‘ibāda* that requires *dhull/khudū* in the heart, and *‘ibāda* that can occur without it. Quite the contrary, ‘Umayrī is consistent in stating that it is necessary and essential, as we have seen.

Zawadi states:

Moreover, even if Dr. Umayri said that actions of worship must indicate inner feelings of submission and humility, this would be his general definition, while we must note exceptions to the general rule mentioned elsewhere.

Zawadi may hold that unconditional acts of *‘ibāda* can constitute worship without those internal feelings of the heart, but it is not possible to reconcile this with the concept of *‘ibāda* laid out in Sh. ‘Umayrī's book.

It was noted above that ‘Umayrī has asserted that feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart are an essential component of ‘ibāda without which the reality of worship cannot obtain. He purportedly deduced this from the statements of numerous scholars, as he himself states:

This is one of the essential components in the heart that make up the concept of ‘ibāda. The statements of the scholars of linguistics, *tafsīr*, and others have agreed, one after another, in mentioning this meaning and making it one of the essential components of ‘ibāda without which the reality [of ‘ibāda] cannot obtain.<sup>12</sup>

Are we to believe that ‘Umayrī does not agree with his own conclusion, deduced from the statements of the scholars?

If he does agree with his own conclusion, then when he reportedly says that some acts unconditionally *constitute worship* (i.e. they are ‘ibāda *mahdā*), how does this not mean that in the case of those acts feelings of utmost humility/submission must necessarily have occurred? Since “the reality and essence” of all worship is linked back to the heart through feelings of utmost humility/submission, then any act that unconditionally *constitutes worship* must be necessitated by a feeling of utmost humility/submission. Otherwise, if we were to say that an act constitutes worship in absence of utmost humility/submission, this would be a blatant contradiction that should be remedied in the long-promised second edition of the book.

Therefore, when Zawadi says:

regardless of any conditions other than the intent to direct them to a being

His point is essentially redundant. Sh. ‘Umayrī has asserted that “for every individual instance” of ‘ibāda (worship) utmost humility/submission must have occurred in the heart. Sh. ‘Umayrī has also asserted that the existence of such feeling in the heart must necessarily produce outward actions of ‘ibāda. Given this relationship between ‘ibāda and utmost humility/submission in the heart, proposing the occurrence of utmost humility/submission as a condition for ‘ibāda *mahdā* (unconditional acts of worship) is unnecessary. It would be equivalent to saying: for unconditional worship to be worship, it must be worship. Needless to say, it would be unnecessary for Sh. ‘Umayrī to stipulate such a condition.

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<sup>12</sup> Idem, p. 37

Zawadi might choose to quibble over this interpretation of Sh. ‘Umayrī’s words, but the reader will find that Sh. ‘Umayrī has contradicted Zawadi’s assertion that shirk “could be present solely in acts” in very explicit terms, when he said:

فأي عمل ظاهر لا ينبع من غاية الذل ونهاية الخضوع فهو ليس بعبادة، وأي معنى في القلب لا يستلزم عملا في الظاهر فهو ليس بعبادة، فلا يتصور أن تكون العبادة بالعمل الباطن فقط، ولا أن تكون بالعمل الظاهر فقط، وإنما لا بد في كل فرد من أفرادها من اجتماع الأمرين معا

Any external action that does not emanate from a feeling of utmost humility and ultimate submission is not ‘ibāda, and any meaning in the heart that does not necessitate any external action is not ‘ibāda. So ‘ibāda CANNOT be conceived of as solely internal action, or as solely external actions. The union of those two things is necessary for every individual instance (of ‘ibāda).<sup>13</sup>

In clear opposition to this, is Zawadi saying that ‘ibāda CAN be conceived of as solely external actions? Or is there an internal component other than “utmost humility and ultimate submission” that we have as of yet not been made aware of?

Additionally, Zawadi also provided the following (faulty) translation of Sh. ‘Umayrī’s words about the relation between acts of ‘ibāda mahḍa and internal feelings of utmost khudū‘ and dhull (consult the footnotes for our comments on his choices in translation):

أما العبادات المحسنة فهي دالة على غاية الخضوع والتذلل بوضع الشريعة، فكل عمل جعلته الشريعة عبادة محسنة، فمعنى ذلك أن الشريعة قررت أن ذلك الفعل في مقياسها دال على ما تقصده من معانٍ الخضوع والتذلل، فالشريعة جعلت الصلاة عبادة محسنة، فمعنى ذلك أن الصلاة في مقياسها دالة على جوهر العبادة

ولبها القلي<sup>14</sup>

“As for unconditional/pure (mahda) acts of worship, they indicate what constitutes utmost submission and humility according to the placement/standards of the Sharee’ah.<sup>15</sup> For every act that the Sharee’ah has

<sup>13</sup> Idem, p. 47

<sup>14</sup> In our article we produced this quote (in Arabic only) with a typo. Zawadi reproduced this quote from our article along with the passage containing it. The mistake here is of course our own and not his, however he did not take notice of the typo and translated the text based on our citation of it. We quoted the end of the passage as (دالة على جوهر العبادة ولبها) whereas it should be (دالة على جوهر العبادة ولبها القلي).

<sup>15</sup> A more literal translation of this passage would render it: “they are indicative of utmost submission and humility by assignment of the Shari‘a.” Zawadi’s addition of the words “what constitutes” is a bit of creative interpretation. While the difference may be subtle, Zawadi’s translation implies that the Shari‘a has identified actions that are inherently utmost submission/humility in and of themselves.

made to be a mahda act of worship, this means that the Sharee'ah has decided that this act, in its (i.e., the Sharee'ah's) standard and measure, indicates what it (i.e., the Sharee'ah) intends by notions of submission and humility. The Sharee'ah has made Salah a mahda act of worship; this means that Salah, in its (i.e., the Sharee'ah's) standard and measure, indicates the substance of heart-based Ibadah.<sup>16</sup> (See the footnotes concerning the portions of the translation highlighted in red)

Zawadi then comments:

All Dr. Umayri is saying here is that mahda acts of worship in their very essence are necessarily Ibadah according to the definition of the Sharee'ah. The acts themselves have ingrained into their very core the meanings of utmost submission and humility, whose foundations are typically rooted in the heart.

Zawadi says that according to 'Umayrī "mahda acts of worship in their very essence are necessarily Ibadah". This is true. However, it is also true that Sh. 'Umayrī explained that 'ibāda by its nature is driven by utmost humility/submission *in the heart*. Indeed, "any external action that does not emanate from a feeling of utmost humility and ultimate submission is not 'ibāda" as stated by Sh. 'Umayrī. Therefore, 'Umayrī sees the actions of 'ibāda as "springing from the utmost submission and ultimate humility found in the heart". He also emphasized the importance of that level of humility/submission by characterizing it as "one of the essential components in the heart". In fact, utmost

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This allows him to propose the idea that this is the case, regardless of the state of the heart. However, 'Umayrī is saying that these are actions identified by the *Shari'a* as indicative of utmost humility/submission. There is no suggestion that there is a new meaning of utmost submission and humility identified in acts of 'ibāda *mahda* which is different from the one he has spoken about elsewhere throughout his book, and which is located in the heart. Rather, he is saying that the *Shari'a* has assigned these acts as indicators that the level of "utmost" humility/submission have been reached. This is why external factors are not needed to gauge the level of humility/submission as is the case with acts of 'ibāda *ghayr mahda*. The fact that this utmost humility/submission is in the heart is further underscored by the conclusion of the cited passage. (See the next footnote for a discussion of its translation)

<sup>16</sup> The reader should consult fn 12 to how we misquoted the Arabic text of this passage and Zawadi followed us in this typo. If we were to consider the passage as we misquoted it, a literal translation would render it: "indicates the essence (or "substance" as translated by Zawadi) of 'ibāda in the heart". Rendering it as "indicates the substance of heart-based Ibadah" is not only ambiguous, but also problematic because the word *qalbī* grammatically is a description of *jawhar*, because both are masculine. In other words, the essence of 'ibāda is in the heart. If it was qualifying 'ibāda, it would be *qalbiyya*. Therefore, translating it as "heart-based Ibadah" is problematic. If we were to use Zawadi's choice of words, it would be "indicates the heart-based substance of Ibadah".

A literal translation of the Arabic passage, correctly reproduced, would render it as "indicates the essence of 'ibāda and its core in the heart (*jawhar al-'ibāda wa lubbihā al-qalbī*)" or "the substance of Ibadah and its heart-based core" to use Zawadi's terms. Clearly then, 'Umayrī intends that the "utmost submission and humility" that is indicated by acts of 'ibāda *mahda* is present in the heart.

humility/submission in the heart is not only important in his concept of *‘ibāda*, it is a crucial component “without which the reality [of *‘ibāda*] cannot obtain”.<sup>18</sup>

This raises the question: is Zawadi saying that we are intended to understand from ‘Umayrī’s book that each of the two categories of *‘ibāda* has an essence and reality different from that of the other? If that is the case, has ‘Umayrī explained anywhere in the book what exactly is the essence of this second category? Or does he perhaps intend that it has a nebulous essence in the heart of undefined (or unidentified) nature? Or are we to understand that the essence of one category of *‘ibāda* has been explained in the book and the other in ‘Umayrī’s & Zawadi’s minds?

If we assume that ‘Umayrī’s definition of *‘ibāda* equally applies to both categories, *mahdā* and *ghayr mahdā*, within the paradigm of the book – and the reasonable reader can only conclude that this must be the case – then it means that every act of *‘ibāda* is necessarily generated by the presence of utmost humility/submission, and that this utmost humility/submission is the essence of *‘ibāda* which is necessarily present in the heart, and “without which the reality [of *‘ibāda*] cannot obtain”. Suggesting that some acts can be *‘ibāda* without feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart requires a rather tortured reading of ‘Umayrī’s words.

When Zawadi says of acts of *‘ibāda mahdā* that they “*have ingrained into their very core the meanings of utmost submission and humility*”, he seems to be suggesting here that the level of utmost humility/submission is located (we are assuming this is what he means by “*ingrained*”) in those actions themselves, so that level no longer needs to be traced back to the heart.

This raises a question concerning Zawadi’s translation of ‘Umayrī’s words. According to Zawadi’s translation an unconditional act of worship such as *ṣalāh* “*indicates the substance of heart-based Ibadah*”. What exactly is meant by “*heart-based Ibadah*”? If these acts “*have ingrained into their very core the meanings of utmost submission and humility*” how then do these acts INDICATE “*the substance of heart-based Ibadah*”?

It seems that Zawadi intends by this rather odd turn of phrase that “utmost submission/humility”, explained throughout the book as “*meanings*” (or “*feelings*”) present in the heart are “*the substance of heart-based Ibadah*”. These meanings however are now embedded in the actions but not the heart.

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<sup>18</sup> See fn 4, 7, 11 for references.

This is a rather odd idea. How can “feelings” and “meanings in the heart” be felt by an **action** itself rather than the **actor**?<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, this rather ambiguous turn of phrase is the only indication we have that the definition of ‘ibāda laid out and reemphasised throughout the book is actually only operative for one of the two categories of ‘ibāda. If this is the case, it would be a rather startling oversight on Sh. ‘Umayrī’s part. This is to say nothing of the fact that this very strained interpretation runs up against other explicit statements of Sh. ‘Umayrī which make it altogether untenable.

It is quite apparent then that when Sh. ‘Umayrī says “*They are indicative of the ultimate submission and humility by assignment of the Shari‘a*”<sup>20</sup> and then goes on to say they are “*indicative of the essence of ‘ibāda and its core in the heart*”,<sup>21</sup> he means that these actions are indicators of the presence of ultimate submission/humility in the heart.

In other words, Sh. ‘Umayrī intends that while acts of ‘ibāda ghayr mahdā require us to look at external factors as indications to gauge whether the threshold of ultimate humility/submission in the heart has been breached, in the case of ‘ibāda mahdā the Shari‘a has informed us that the mere performance of these acts is sufficient indication that this threshold has been breached.

Therefore, when Zawadi says “*whose foundations are typically rooted in the heart*” or that “*Dr. Umayri’s point is that these actions of Ibadah typically emanate from feelings in the heart*” then “*typically*” is Zawadi’s own addition, unsubstantiated by ‘Umayrī’s words. Nevertheless, was this addition supposed to insinuate that the definition somehow applies to most cases with a few exceptions? Is this what Zawadi was trying to do here? The fact however is that it does not matter whether it is “*typically*”, always, or never rooted in the heart, because this is not the aspect of the action or humility that is the determining factor in Zawadi’s presentation of the view. He expressly moved the determining factor from being located in the heart (as per the definition in

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<sup>19</sup> As already mentioned at the beginning, it should be remembered that Zawadi himself translated the part about utmost humility/submission in ‘Umayrī’s definition as “feelings of utmost humility and submission”:

It is that intentional state which combines feelings of utmost humility and submission with an ultimate feeling of love which stirs the individual to cling unto his object of Ibadah, submit to its will, stay in continuous connection with it, and perform actions to please it.

<sup>20</sup> (فهي دالة على غاية المخصوص والتذلل بوضع الشريعة)

<sup>21</sup> (دالة على جوهر العبادة ولبها القلب)

‘Umayrī’s book) to the action itself, for *‘ibāda mahdā*. Accordingly, in Zawadi’s view the action has a certain humility/submission that is “**ingrained**” into it. THAT is the determining factor, what makes an action of *‘ibāda mahdā* worship (by assignment of the Sharī‘a) in his view. Therefore, once the determining factor is determined, anything beyond that is of no relevance. As such, if the determining factor (the “**ingrained**” humility/submission) is located within the action itself, Zawadi can extend the roots of that “**ingrained**” humility to the person’s heart, their back pocket, or Wonderland; it does not make any difference, nor does it make ‘Umayrī’s definition more relevant or applicable to most cases. Because ‘Umayrī did not simply say that utmost humility is located in the heart; he made the humility located in the heart the determining factor of his definition. Zawadi effectively made ‘Umayrī’s definition inapplicable to actions of *‘ibāda mahdā* by moving the location of the determining factor of those acts from the heart to the actions themselves.

Ironically, Zawadi concludes the discussion of his translation of this passage, saying:

“With all due respect to ST, I did not misunderstand Dr. Umayri. They did, yet again, on a major point, **as a result of their failure** (emphasis his) to read and fully grasp everything he says, notwithstanding their uncharitable refusal to allow all his words explain each other.” (p. 3)

If this is indeed a major point of ‘Umayrī’s book, then it is quite odd that discovering it requires ignoring what ‘Umayrī has stated throughout the book while resorting to a rather tortured reading of a passage that is at best ambiguous, and more likely, actually undermines the claim that Zawadi is using it to substantiate.

## EXCEPTIONS VS FULFILMENTS: HOW DO THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF ‘UMAYRĪ’S THEORY RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER

Zawadi further says:

Moreover, even if Dr. Umayri said that actions of worship must indicate inner feelings of submission and humility, this would be his general definition, while we must note exceptions to the general rule mentioned elsewhere.

Except that the exceptions are not presented in the book as... exceptions. This is what we find in the book:

- The essence and reality of *‘ibāda* is unreservedly located in the heart in the form of feelings of “utmost” humility/submission.

- ‘ibāda being necessarily made up of two fundamental constituents: those feelings in the heart AND the actions they generate or necessitate, no instance of ‘ibāda is conceivable with either of them lacking.
- Acts of ‘ibāda *maḥḍa* are in themselves indications that the threshold of “utmost” humility/submission has been breached, and are therefore always ‘ibāda
- For acts of ‘ibāda *ghayr maḥḍa* such as *sujūd*, we have a list of external factors that allows us to gauge when it qualifies as ‘ibāda, but even those external factors are considered as “*indication that the meaning of worship (ta‘abbud) is preponderant in the doer*”<sup>22</sup> The meaning of worship, as explained by Sh. ‘Umayrī, is the breaching of the threshold of “utmost” humility/submission in the heart.

Ironically, while Zawadi chooses to characterise Sh. ‘Umayrī’s definition as a “*general rule*” with exceptions, Sh. ‘Umayrī himself states, “*This definition encompasses ALL the essential defining parameters (jamī‘ al-muḥaddidāt al-asāsiyya)* on which the concept of ‘ibāda is based in and of itself, and it reveals the operative differences that distinguish the scenarios that are covered by it from those that are not.”<sup>23</sup>

The reader familiar with the traditional Islāmic sciences will recognise in this description the notion of a *jāmi‘-māni‘* definition,<sup>24</sup> or in other words a definition that clearly and rigorously delineates what falls under it and what does not. While it might be common for the early Arabic linguists and Arabic dictionaries to define words with general descriptions, synonyms, illustrative examples, or approximations, this is certainly not applicable to ‘Umayrī’s definition here.

On the other hand, if Zawadi is correct in his assertions about the nature of the definition given in the book, this would mean that the exhaustive definition of ‘ibāda

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<sup>22</sup> Idem, p. 207

دليل على غلبة معنى التعبد على فاعله

<sup>23</sup> Idem, p. 36

فهذا التعريف يستوعب **جميع** المحددات الأساسية التي يقوم عليها مفهوم العبادة من حيث هي، ويكشف عن الفروق المؤثرة بين الأحوال الداخلية فيه والخارجية عنه

<sup>24</sup> The *jāmi‘-māni‘* definition is explained by Louay Safi as:

The definition should be *coextensive* with the thing defined. The definition should not be broader than the *definiendum* so as to include any other object, nor should it be narrower so as to exclude parts of the defined object. This is what classical scholars mean when they refer to a definition as a “comprehensive but exclusive term” [*al hadd al jāmi‘ al mani‘*]. =

= L. Safi, *The Foundation of Knowledge A Comparative Study in Islamic and Western Methods of Inquiry*, 2014  
Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, p. 79

laid out in that book is **inoperative** with regards to acts of *‘ibāda mahḍa*, since the *khudū‘* and *dhull* in the heart in their case is no longer one of the “**essential defining parameters**” for this category. Rather, Zawadi claims, utmost *khudū‘/dhull* is instead “**ingrained**” into the core of the *‘ibāda mahḍa* acts themselves.<sup>25</sup>

As noted, Sh. ‘Umayrī has however explained in unmistakable terms that the *khudū‘* and *dhull* mentioned in his fully comprehensive definition (not just “**general rule**”) refer to feelings located in the heart, making Zawadi’s claim untenable.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of *‘ibāda ghayr mahḍa*, Zawadi has yet to pronounce himself about whether he thinks the definition is still a “**general rule**” with exceptions, or it is a fully comprehensive one at least for this category, i.e. the definition applies to every instance of *ghayr mahḍa* acts.<sup>27</sup>

If we look at *sujūd*, an act classified by ‘Umayrī as *‘ibāda ghayr mahḍa*, ‘Umayrī provides a list of five external factors that indicate a particular instance of *sujūd* is in fact an act of *‘ibāda*. In four of these factors, there is no necessary relation between them and the internal core ‘Umayrī identifies as the essence of *‘ibāda*.<sup>28</sup> As such, when the feelings of humility/submission in the heart do not breach the “utmost” threshold (in four out of the five external factors), there are only two possibilities with regards

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that if the determining factor for *‘ibāda* identified by Sh. ‘Umayrī in his definition is inapplicable to acts of *‘ibāda mahḍa*, this means that prominent acts designated as worship by the Sharī‘ā, such as *wudū‘*, *ṣalāh*, and *hajj*, are effectively exceptions to Sh. ‘Umayrī’s definition.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 4 above.

<sup>27</sup> He does make a rather strange comment on p. 25 of *Lived Realities: Part 3* that seems to suggest that the internal quantity of *khudū‘* and *dhull* is only just one of the five indicators (no. 3) that demonstrate that a conditional act of worship is in fact *‘ibāda*. He refers the reader to p. 207 of ‘Umayrī’s book. How he has arrived at this interpretation of ‘Umayrī’s words at the place referenced is unclear to us, but it does raise the question: is he saying that the other four indicators would transform an act into *‘ibāda* regardless of whether ultimate humility/submission has been reached in the heart?

<sup>28</sup> Namely:

- (1) Prostration to something that is not commonly prostrated to by way of greeting;
- (2) Prostration to something commonly worshipped by polytheists;
- (3) Prostration to something in a state of displaying humility, ardent devotion, and earnest supplication, while making a lengthy prostration.
- (4) Prostration to something that one believes to possess qualities of Rububīyyah.
- (5) To intend worship.

There is an apparent relationship between the third factor and the requirement of “*utmost humility and submission in the heart*”, but the suggestion there is a necessary connection between the other four and this meaning seems somewhat arbitrary.

to the relation of each instance of *sujūd* in the context of those external indicators and ‘Umayrī’s definition:

- 1) Those feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart are imagined and arbitrarily imposed as having occurred, to keep the definition applicable and relevant.
- 2) Feelings of utmost humility/submission in the heart are no longer the operative factor in the determination of worship in this context. In this case, it does not matter whether they are “typically” located elsewhere than the heart (e.g. the action within a specific context, or the context itself, etc... as Zawadi did with acts of ‘ibāda *mahdā*), or abandoned altogether. The result being the same: they are not the determining factor which turns the act into worship.

One rightly wonders: what then is the scope and function of such a definition?! This is further testimony to the point made in our article that all of the above makes Sh. ‘Umayrī’s definition practically redundant or as useful as can be expected of a definition whose exceptions possibly outnumber the instances where it is applicable.

Then Zawadi further states:

This is why Dr. Umayri says that the mere enacting of mahda acts of worship is inherently Shirk

It is true that for Dr. ‘Umayrī, mere enactment of “mahda acts of worship” is necessarily shirk. However, it would be instructive to examine Sh. ‘Umayrī’s definition of *shirk* in ‘ibāda or *shirk al ulūhiyya*, which he characterises as a “*precise definition (ta’rīf mundabit)*”:

تسوية غير الله باهله في ما يختص به من معانٍ التذلل والخضوع ومن الأعمال الظاهرة الدالة على ذلك

*[Shirk al ulūhiyya]* is equating other than Allāh with Allāh in what is only due to Him of the meanings of submission and humility, and the apparent actions indicating that.<sup>31</sup>

Again, it is hard to see here how labelling an act being inherently *shirk*, within the paradigm laid out by Sh. ‘Umayrī in his book, excludes the necessity of the level of utmost humility and submission in the heart being breached, regardless of whether it happens consciously and intentionally or unconsciously and unintentionally.

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<sup>31</sup> Idem, p. 56

Perhaps this definition is also intended as a “**general rule**” and when Sh. ‘Umayrī characterises it as a “**precise definition**”, he means that it is only generally precise.

According to Zawadi we have made “**a major error**” in understanding ‘Umayrī on the need for utmost humility/submission to be present in the heart for ‘ibāda to occur. In his words, this misunderstanding is “**a result of [our] failure to read and fully grasp everything he says, notwithstanding their uncharitable refusal to allow all his words explain each other.**” (p. 3) Quite the contrary, the objective reader will see we have taken great care to reconstruct ‘Umayrī’s paradigm from his own explicit statements, looked at together as a cohesive whole. The least that can be said is that if there is “**a major error**” in our understanding of Sh. ‘Umayrī’s position here, then the error is clearly on his part, not ours.

In summary, it has been clearly established from the citations produced that, in Sh. ‘Umayrī’s conceptualisation of ‘ibāda, he explicitly locates submission and humility in the heart. Indeed, it is one of its “**essential components in the heart**”. ‘Umayrī also explicitly affirms that its presence is necessary for ‘ibāda to occur. Furthermore, he is also explicit that this rule does not admit any exception. None of the citations cited by Zawadi or the interpretations offered by him do anything to change this.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP OF *INHIRĀF* IN *RUBŪBIYYA* TO *SHIRK* IN *‘IBĀDA*

As for the issue of *inhirāf* (the “**kufri distorted view**” about *rubūbiyya* that necessarily accompanies ‘ibāda), Zawadi argues that the feelings of utmost submission and humility can precede the *inhirāf*:

ST are confusing causation with correlation. We can imagine a scenario where internal feelings of utmost submission and humility do **precede** (and possibly even cause) the distorted belief in Rububiyyah.

For example, out of intense love and admiration for a king, one continuously makes sujud to and slaughters for him in a state of utter submission and humiliation for the purpose of seeking closeness (taqarrub) to him. The love initially caused him to commit this Shirk for the king, which eventually led to the person necessarily thinking less of Allah as His Lord in terms of His being His Sustainer, Overseer, Answerer of his dua (Al-Mujeeb), etc.

So for Zawadi, someone can commit an act of ‘ibāda, and therefore be guilty of *shirk al ‘ibāda*, without being guilty of a distorted belief of *inhirāf*. We do not wish to delve into the validity, or lack thereof, of this claim; only to point out that this contradicts what Sh. ‘Umayrī explicitly said in the book:

أما التلازم فمعناه: أن الإقرار بربوبية الله تعالى يستلزم الإقرار بأنه المعبود وحده سبحانه؛ لأنه لا يستحق أن يعبد إلا الخالق الرازق المدبر، فإذا لم يتحقق اللازم وهو إفراد الله بالعبادة فإن ذلك دليل على انتفاء الملزم أو نقصه وانحرافه.

فكل من أشرك في العبادة فلا بد أن يكون منحرفاً في الربوبية إما باعتقاد باطل فيها وإما بنقص أو خلل في الإيمان بها، فلا يوجد عند المشرك في العبادة توحيد صحيح مستقيم في الربوبية، **إذ لو كان عنده توحيد صحيح في الربوبية لما وقع في الشرك في العبادة**

As for the necessary implication (*talāzum*) [between the two], it means: affirming Allāh's rubūbiyya necessitates affirming that he is the only One worshiped (*ma'būd*), because no one deserves to be worshiped except the Creator, the Sustainer, and Governor (of all creation). So when the *lāzim* (necessitater), which is singling out Allāh for worship, is missing, then this is proof that the *malzūm* (necessitated) [which is God's rubūbiyya] is also absent, lacking, or distorted."

Whoever committed *shirk* in 'ibāda must necessarily have fallen into (*inhirāf*) distortion in rubūbiyya, either due to a false belief about it (*rubūbiyya*), or defect in his faith in it. The one guilty of *shirk* in 'ibāda cannot have a *tawhīd* that is correct and sound in rubūbiyya, because if that was the case, he would not have committed *shirk* in 'ibāda.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly then, the explanation Zawadi has offered cannot be justified from the author's words. If it was possible for *shirk* in 'ibāda to "precede" *inhirāf* in rubūbiyya as Zawadi claims, it would make no sense for the author to say that if a person had correct and sound *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*, "he would not have committed *shirk* in 'ibāda" *Inhirāf* in rubūbiyya then necessarily precedes *shirk* in 'ibāda. Therefore, this is an explicit contradiction between the position asserted by Zawadi and the one maintained by 'Umayrī in his book.

## IS YOUR KHUDŪ<sup>c</sup> HEARTLESS?

Zawadi states:

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<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 16. See also p. 14:

الشرك في الألوهية لا بد أن يصحبه انحراف في الربوبية

*Talāzum*, translated here as "necessary implication" means that the relation between two things (one called *lāzim*, and the other *malzūm*) is such that if the *lāzim* is present, the *malzūm* is necessarily present as well. If the *lāzim* is absent, the *malzūm* is necessarily absent as well. In other words, the existence or non-existence of the *lāzim* necessitates the existence or non-existence of the *malzūm*.

*Lāzim* is also referred to in English works of logic as the consequent or the implicate, while *malzūm* is referred to as the antecedent or implicant. See 'Azmī T. al-Sayyed Ahmad's thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1981), *Al-Ghazālī's Views on Logic*, p. 158.

This is why Dr. Umayri says that the mere enacting of mahda acts of worship is inherently Shirk, and he distinguished that from actively and consciously having feelings of utmost submission and humility in the heart.<sup>1</sup>

According to ST's portrayal of Dr. Umayri's stance, that would mean that they think that he does not believe that a Muslim praying without khushu' in his Salāh is actually worshipping! This is absurd!

We agree that this is absurd. We would also like to thank Zawadi for acknowledging that an action can be 'ibāda without passing a particular nebulous threshold of "utmost" humility/submission in the heart. While Zawadi argues that this person's *salāh* would be 'ibāda because "*the acts themselves have ingrained into their very core the meanings of utmost submission and humility*", we contend that there is a more important and more obvious meaning that makes this action 'ibāda: the man is a Muslim, and therefore believes that Allāh is Lord of the Worlds, possessing all divine qualities (alone and without partner).

Indeed, this meaning is operative in every act that a Muslim performs for Allāh's sake. This is why any act a Muslim does for Allāh's sake is an act of 'ibāda. It does not require a thermostat to measure his internal submission/humility or consideration of random lists of external factors. His performance of an action for Allāh's sake, acknowledging that Allāh is His Lord, is the utmost submission. This is certainly a much more compelling way to understand 'ibāda than to do so by:

- Searching for an undefinable "amount" of "utmost" submission/humility in the heart, determined by a list of acts that magically indicate its presence, or a list of external factors that seemingly indicate (in ways that are never clearly explained) its presence;
- Or to consider whether or not the Shari'a has designated (although how it has done so is unclear) that a particular action by default is automatically "*ingrained*" with the "amount" of "utmost" submission/humility in the act itself.

Perhaps there is some other unforeseen dynamic exception that we are overlooking. Whatever the case, we can only hope that this confusion is cleared up in the promised second edition.

In summary, the table found on the next page depicts the differences between the concept and definition laid out by 'Umayrī in his book and Zawadi's own interpretation of it:

	‘Umayrī's Definition	Zawadi's View
Determining Factor for ‘ibāda Maḥḍa	Utmost humility and submission	“Utmost humility and submission” *
Determining Factor for ‘ibāda Ghayr Maḥḍa	Utmost humility and submission	“Utmost humility and submission” *
Locus of Determining Factor for ‘ibāda Maḥḍa	Heart	Actions themselves
Locus of Determining Factor for ‘ibāda Ghayr Maḥḍa	Heart	?
‘ibāda Maḥḍa - Breach of Threshold of UHS in the Heart Required for Occurrence of Worship	Yes**	No
‘ibāda Ghayr Maḥḍa - <u>with External Factors</u> - Breach of Threshold of UHS in the Heart Required for Occurrence of Worship	Yes**	?
‘ibāda Ghayr Maḥḍa - <u>Without External Factors</u> - Breach of Threshold of UHS in the Heart Required for Occurrence of Worship	Yes	Yes

UHS = utmost humility and submission

\* While Zawadi calls the determining factor for acts of worship “utmost humility and submission” it should be clear by now that his notion of it is distinctly different from anything found in ‘Umayrī’s book. We assume that this is the determining factor for him for all acts but we are uncertain if this is also a “general rule”.

\*\* We can only assume that the threshold of utmost humility/submission in the heart will have to be “imagined” to be breached in these cases, for ‘Umayrī’s claims to be consistent with the definition and concept of ‘ibāda laid out throughout his book. If one were to suppose that ‘Umayrī’s answer to this question would be “No” in either case, i.e. that utmost humility in the heart is not required for the occurrence of ‘ibāda, this would mean that the definition of ‘ibāda is not applicable and therefore of no use. This is not to mention the fact this would be a blatant contradiction of his words in other places.

## ACCUSATIONS

Finally, we would like to draw the reader's attention to one last point. Zawadi deplores the injustice in our presentation of Sh. 'Umayrī's concept, and repeatedly accuses us of "inexcusable distortions" and "uncharitability" towards Sh. 'Umayrī because we did not consider the possibility that Sh. 'Umayrī's definition could have been a "general rule" that admits exceptions, as is the case with other scholars. At this stage, we do not wish to unnecessarily prolong the discussion, but we will quote Zawadi's objections, followed by 'Umayrī's own words about the practical pertinence of his definition and concept of 'ibāda, and leave it to the reader's discretion to decide whether they allow for any exception, or Zawadi is just crying wolf.

Zawadi said:

"With all due respect to ST, I did not misunderstand Dr. Umayri. They did, yet again, on a major point, as a result of their failure to read and fully grasp everything he says, notwithstanding their uncharitable refusal to allow all his words explain each other." (p. 3)

"Moreover, I have demonstrated that ST are **highly and visibly inconsistent** when they approach virtually every scholar's attempt at defining Ibadah with their approach to Dr. Umayri. They are okay accepting that single one-liner definitions need not be so exhaustive to the point that it encompasses literally every single scenario, yet they do not afford the same courtesy to Dr. Umayri who even went out of his way to provide indicators deduced by scholarly precedent to address exceptional scenarios not covered within typical generic definitions." (p. 27)

"Yet, ST's treatment of Dr. Umayri compared to the remaining scholars has been nothing short of **inconsistent uncharitability** in an attempt to score cheap points." (p. 28)

"How about the remainder of the definitions they cited throughout their article, where I pointed out that the very same scholars they cited would have accepted exceptions to their general definition as well? Will ST criticize their definitions as well?" (p. 26)

"Moreover, even if Dr. Umayri said that actions of worship must indicate inner feelings of submission and humility, this would be his general definition, while we must note exceptions to the general rule mentioned elsewhere." (p.2)

'Umayrī said:

"This definition encompasses **ALL** the essential defining parameters (*jamī‘ al-muḥaddidāt al-asāsiyya*) on which the concept of 'ibāda is based in and of itself, and it reveals the operative differences that distinguish the scenarios that are covered by it from those that are not."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Tahqīq al-īfāda*, p. 36

“Any external action that does not emanate from a feeling of utmost humility and ultimate submission is not ‘ibāda, and any feeling in the heart that does not necessitate any external action is not ‘ibāda. So ‘ibāda cannot be conceived of as solely internal action, or as solely external actions. The union of those two things is necessary for every individual instance (of ‘ibāda).”<sup>35</sup>

We invite the reader to scrutinise these quotes of ‘Umayrī and to revisit all the other quotes of ‘Umayrī that we have cited in this article as well; to consider our interpretation of them closely against that of Zawadi’s; and then to draw his own conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that Zawadi was a major contributor to the book by the testimony of the author, it seems that he has his own unique understanding of this particular theory of *shirk al ‘ibāda*, an understanding that at times explicitly contradicts what the author has written in his book. Either this reflects a problem in the manner in which the book has been written, or there are irreconcilable differences in conceptualisation between ‘Umayrī and Zawadi. While each is entitled to his own opinion, our critique in the remaining articles will necessarily be focused on ‘Umayrī’s book as these articles (the drafts of which were already complete before we began publication) were written for expressly that purpose.

Allāh ﷺ knows best, and may He send His blessings upon the leader of the Messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

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<sup>35</sup> Idem, p. 47